2009-10 Annual Report of the University Athletics Advisory Committee

The committee shall review and monitor admissions decisions and the academic performance of all student-athletes by regularly receiving appropriate and relevant information regarding the academic eligibility and progress of student-athletes, including graduation rates. The committee also receives reports on, reviews and advises, as appropriate, the Faculty Senate, the NCAA Faculty Athletic Representative (FAR), the president, the director of athletics, and the Board of Trustees on the following: annual inter-collegiate athletic program schedules and major changes to them; the annual budget of the Athletics Department; admissions decisions for athletes receiving grants-in-aid; NCAA certification reports, including Title 9 reports; major requests for waiver of any institutional athletic policies; major changes in Athletics Department personnel (specifically the director of athletics, director of the academic support unit, and head coaches for each sport); the needs, interests, and concerns of student athletes; all other issues regarding inter-collegiate activities as referred to it by University officials. The committee shall make at least an annual, written report of its activities to the Faculty Senate, the president, and the director of athletics.

Members of the committee for 2009-2010 were:

Elected
Bruce Meglino, Business (2010)
Lynda Nilges, Education (2010)
Pamela Melton, Chair, Law Library (2011)
Ray Torres, Geological Sciences (2011)
Zach Kelehear, Education (2012)

Appointed
William Bearden, Business, FAR SEC Representative
Eric Hyman, Director of Athletics
Dennis A. Pruitt, Student and Alumni Services
David Crockett, Business (2010)
Herbert Adams, Board of Trustees
Trey Tharpe, President, Student Athletics Advisory Committee
Vacant, Undergraduate Student
Kathryn McKay, Association of Graduate Students

At the September meeting, Scott Verzyl, Director of Undergraduate Admissions, briefed us on the admissions process, including the special admission process occasionally used by university departments to achieve admission of students who have not met the technical requirements for admission. The vast majority of our student athletes are admitted to the University through the regular admissions process.
At the October meeting, Jennifer Stiles, Assistant Athletic Director for Compliance, briefed us on the university’s process for dealing with violations (major and secondary) of the NCAA rules governing collegiate athletics, including the academic eligibility of student-athletes. Also, Eric Hyman, the Athletic Director, brought us up to date on the progress of the Athletics Department Capital Improvements campaign, which includes the recently completed Dodie Anderson Academic Enrichment Center (the “Dodie”). We were gratified to learn that over the past six semesters the University of South Carolina has had the largest number of student athletes on the SEC Commissioner’s Academic Honor Roll.

At the November meeting, we heard from Raymond Harrison, director of Academics/Life Skills, who gave us an overview of the way his department assists and empowers the student-athletes to become better students and to prepare for success after graduation. In the course of that briefing, the committee discussed ways that athletes and the general student population currently share university academic support resources and ways this collaboration could be increased, to the benefit of all. The committee also dealt with issues around travel for athletic competitions (both notice and attendance), and academic advising for student-athletes.

At the January meeting, committee members were given a tour of the newly completed Dodie Anderson Academic Enrichment Center. The committee received a report from Raymond Harrison, the Director of Academics/Life Skills for the USC Athletics Department, regarding the implementation of new software (“Gradefirst”) to track student athletes’ academic progress. The software allows the department to track, among other things, faculty responses and reporting of student athlete attendance and classroom issues. The committee asked for a report of that response rate, which Raymond said his staff would compile.

At the February meeting, the committee welcomed Shelley Smith, the coach of the women’s soccer team. Coach Smith noted that she has high expectations of her team members in the classroom as well as on the field. The team had a 3.2 GPA and has had at least one Academic All-American a year for the last 5 years. This year they had two Academic All-American athletes. Academic aid is very important in the recruitment process because of the limited amount of athletic scholarship money that the team has. Raymond Harrison reported that his department experienced a 57% rate of return from faculty members on “Gradefirst” requests. That is a substantial improvement over the old system. Bill Bearden shared data on the majors of student athletes. The 511 student-athletes are scattered among 65 different majors.

At the April meeting, two incoming new members, Joel Samuels (Law) and Jean Ellis (Geography), were introduced. Then the committee received a report from Amber Falluca, a master’s degree candidate. She had surveyed members of the faculty senates at SEC member schools on their knowledge and perceptions of intercollegiate athletics.

The final meeting of the year was not held until July, because members of the Athletic Department were with the University’s baseball team as it won the College World Series, to claim an NCAA national championship. At the July meeting, Jeff Tallant presented the Athletic Department budget to the committee. The committee also received a report from Steve
Bondurant, the academic advisor for baseball, volleyball, and men’s soccer. Not only did the baseball team win the College World Series, but they also received the “Elite 88” trophy for the highest team GPA among the College World Series teams.

There were no major changes in Athletics Department personnel presented to the committee for review or advice, nor were there any issues regarding inter-collegiate activities referred to it for review or advice by University officials.

Respectfully submitted,

Pamela Rogers Melton, Chair
Associate Director for Administration
Coleman Karesh Law Library
University of South Carolina School of Law